

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grant

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NMFS-HCPO-2008-2000978

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation.

Dates: Applications should be submitted via www.grants.gov, and must be received by grants.gov no later than 11:59 PM EST on August 31, 2007. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program invites applications requesting funding to establish one or more regional habitat restoration partnership(s) for 1 to 3 years. The partnership(s) is expected to catalyze the implementation of habitat restoration projects that will benefit coastal resources through improved Great Lakes habitat quality. The centerpiece of the program will be one or more restoration projects in an Area of Concern that: are based on strong science and data availability; are ecosystem focused; and, involve significant problems and lake-wide improvements. Project areas should include locations where: 1) maximum use can be made of on-going restoration efforts and partnerships, 2) availability of matching funds are met, 3) the problem is significant to the Great Lakes region, NOAA's mission and established priorities, and, 4) there is a scientific merit in restoration. NOAA envisions working jointly on such a partnership(s) through its Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program (GLHRP) to fund and administer projects that support community-identified priorities such as: 1) restoring and enhancing critical, nearshore areas, tributaries and connecting channels; 2) remediating basin-wide sources of stress; 3) protecting healthy functioning areas; and, 4) monitoring ecosystem health. This document describes the types of partnership(s) that NOAA envisions establishing, portrays the qualities that NOAA has found to be ideal in a partnership, and describes criteria under which applications will be evaluated for funding consideration. The partnership application(s) selected through this announcement must be in support of ongoing efforts in an Area of Concern (AOC) and will be implemented through a cooperative agreement. The selection process is anticipated to be highly competitive. Funding of up to \$1 million may be available to establish the habitat restoration partnership(s) in 2008, and annual funding is anticipated to maintain them for 1 to 3 years duration.

Definitions of Terms:

1) The Great Lakes region will be defined by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement: Article 1.(h) "Great Lakes System: means all of the streams, rivers, lakes and other bodies of water that are within the drainage basin on the St. Lawrence River at or upstream from the point at which this river becomes the international boundary between Canada and the United States."

2) Areas of Concern are severely degraded geographic areas within the Great Lakes Basin. They are defined by the U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (Annex 2 of the 1987 Protocol) as "geographic areas that fail to meet the general specific objectives of the agreement where such failure has caused or is likely to cause impairment of beneficial use of the area's ability to support aquatic life."

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

NOAA's GLHRP promotes strong partnerships at the regional and local levels to fund activities that restore coastal resources and their habitats. The objective of this program is to fund one or more partner(s) that is regionally-based and has an ecosystem-approach restoration plan focused on an AOC. NOAA envisions this partner(s) will work closely through a cooperative agreement with NOAA using its strong-science and monitoring capabilities as underpinnings. NOAA's science-based approach includes: 1) identifying a problem to address; 2) using historical or ongoing science and research to determine what environmental factors are significant in driving the problem; 3) developing a habitat improvement project that improves the environmental factors; and, 4) conducting monitoring to demonstrate that the project improved the factors and at least partially improved the original problem.

NOAA recognizes that the Great Lakes are at a point where ecosystem-level changes are occurring rapidly in response to multiple stresses. Adding NOAA's scientific capabilities to an AOC where other partners are addressing stresses within their purview will mitigate the rapidity of these changes. Since NOAA's restoration efforts are ultimately focused on healthy coastal and lake habitats, restoration efforts must result in improving habitat quality in these areas that will support and maintain coastal resources. Restoration that can influence habitat and water quality may include, but not limited to: 1) improving coastal and nearshore habitats by re-grading, replanting or other shoreline improvements or stabilization actions; 2) reducing pollution loads such as nutrients, microbes, pesticides, and other contaminants to the coastal areas through best-management practices or other physical habitat manipulations; 3) mitigating lake-ecosystem food-web disruption associated with aquatic invasive species; or 4) removing or modifying blockages in tributaries to the Great Lakes to improve migratory fish passage.

NOAA's GLHRP recognizes the significant role that partnerships can play in making habitat restoration happen within coastal communities, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support. The role of NOAA in the GLHRP is to help identify potential restoration project(s) based on strong-science, strengthen the development and implementation of sound restoration project(s) and long-term, ongoing regional and local partnership(s) to support science-based restoration efforts of coastal resource habitats across a wide geographic area.

It is expected that the competitive partnership process will provide for additional funds from other federal agencies, states, and local municipalities. Project areas will

be selected at locations where: 1) maximum use can be made of on-going restoration efforts and partnerships, 2) availability of matching funds are met, 3) the problem is significant to the Great Lakes, NOAA's mission and established priorities, and, 4) there is a scientific merit in restoration.

B. Program Priorities

The program priorities for this opportunity support NOAA's Ecosystems Mission Goal to protect, restore and manage the use of ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources through ecosystem-based management. The program strives to demonstrate meaningful, measurable, and sustainable ecological benefits to coastal and freshwater resources through habitat restoration. The program aims to strike a balance between a strong regional partner(s) and NOAA in supporting community-identified priorities in an AOC to restore, protect, conserve and enhance coastal and open-lake habitats.

NOAA is interested in developing a multi-year regional/local partnership(s) that will lead to the accomplishment of on-the-ground restoration of coastal and open-lake habitats to benefit coastal resources. The primary goals of NOAA in establishing these partnerships are to restore Great Lakes coastal and open-lake resources by contributing towards major improvements to a selected Area of Concern (AOC) ecosystem by addressing such habitat beneficial use impairments as: 1) loss of fish and wildlife habitat; 2) degraded fish and wildlife populations; and, 3) degraded benthos. The centerpiece of the program will be one or more restoration partnerships in an AOC that are: based on strong science; are ecosystem focused; and, involve significant problems and lake-wide improvements. Project areas should include locations where: 1) maximum use can be made of on-going restoration efforts and partnerships, 2) availability of matching funds, 3) the problem is significant to the Great Lakes, NOAA's mission and established priorities, and, 4) there is a scientific merit in restoration.

A successful applicant(s) will be one whose partnership proposal(s) is broad-reaching and demonstrates the potential for significant benefits to Great Lakes coastal and open-lake resources across a geographic area and/or according to a publicly vetted, prioritized regional restoration plan or similar document to accomplish coordinated, strategic implementation of a partnership(s). Applicants seeking to establish partnerships will need to demonstrate that restoration activities will be consistent with NOAA's priorities and goals outlined in this notice. Applicants should also note that the following activities will not be considered under partnership awards: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource injuries under federal, state or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate coordinated efforts among multiple groups such as universities, science centers, state and municipal agencies, watershed groups, local schools, civic groups and non-governmental organizations. Applications should involve a coalition that has or will develop joint goals and objectives to accomplish habitat restoration, and whose activities are expected to take place across a substantial and defined geographic region.

C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970, to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries habitat restoration.

D. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the partnership. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before a notice of award document is provided by the NOAA Grants Office is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of partnership awards will be February 1, 2008 and the earliest start date will be March 1, 2008. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing requested start dates for proposed restoration partnership activities.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that funding of up to \$1 million is expected to be available for establishing a habitat restoration partnership(s) with the NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program in FY 2008. Actual funding availability for this program is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2008 Congressional appropriations. Funding for subsequent years will depend on the ability of partners to successfully perform partnership activities as stated in their applications. NOAA anticipates that the typical partnership(s) award will range from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 for the initial year of a regional or local habitat restoration partnership(s) established in FY 2008. NOAA will not accept proposals with a single year budget under \$250,000 or over \$1,000,000 under this solicitation. Applicants can request increases to continue scaling up partnership activities in subsequent budget periods to a limit of \$2,000,000 in FY 2009, and to \$3,000,000 in FY 2010; however annual funding levels and any increases over FY 2008 levels for successful applicants will be dependent upon partnership success, regional priorities, and future budget increases provided by Congress.

The Selecting Official will determine the proportion of funds available to the GLHRP on an annual basis that will be obligated to a regional/local partnership(s) each year. The number of partnership awards to be made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for initiating partnerships by the applicants, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the GLHRP by Congress.

There is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to initiate a partnership(s) where funding has been recommended, and the number of regional partnerships established will be up to the discretion of the Selecting Official. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded to work within a habitat restoration partnership will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives, and multi-year funding requests are expected to be funded incrementally on an annual basis. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to establish any specific partnership proposed or to obligate all or any parts of the available funds for partnership activities.

As this is the first year of the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program, no prior award information can be provided for reference purposes.

B. Project/Award Period

Applications for regional partnerships should cover a project period for 1 to 3 years. Multi-year partnership requests are expected to be funded incrementally on an annual basis. Once awarded in FY 2008, multi-year partnerships will not need to compete for funding in subsequent years. The intention of the GLHRP is to attract and maintain partnerships that will be ongoing and long-lasting; established partnerships are expected to continue through the duration of the award period. If an application is recommended and approved for funding under a partnership, NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with this partnership in subsequent years. A recommendation to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) to continue an award for a partnership in subsequent years, or to extend the period of performance, is at the total discretion of the GLHRP Selecting Official.

Future opportunities for submitting proposals to the competitive process for developing multi-year, regional/local habitat restoration partnerships are anticipated, but will be dependent on GLHRP funding levels and on the performance of existing partners to successfully conduct partnership activities to identify, develop, evaluate, implement and monitor science-based Great Lakes coastal habitat restoration projects.

The earliest anticipated start date for partnership awards will be March 1, 2008. Applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed partnership activities.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

NOAA envisions working collaboratively to implement Great Lakes coastal habitat restoration primarily through cooperative agreements. Potential partners may apply for funds to work with the NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program on a multi-year basis to identify, develop, implement and monitor science-based habitat restoration activities to benefit coastal resources. Partnerships established through this cooperative agreement mechanism may include funding of sub-awards made through the partner organization. The sub-awards would be chosen by joint evaluation of habitat restoration projects.

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a cooperative agreement under the terms of this document. The objective of a cooperative agreement is for the restoration project, while based on community-derived priorities, to be infused with NOAA science to determine the most effective restoration effort that meets NOAA's ecosystem goals. For applications funded through cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of the federal government may include, but is not limited to, activities such as assisting the regional partner(s) to promote regionally/locally driven habitat restoration activities; conducting site visits and evaluating the performance of the restoration project(s); supporting project partners to enhance their effectiveness

in meeting stated restoration goals for improving Great Lakes coastal habitats, including assistance with the development of appropriate monitoring to ensure a basic level of assessment of project success; providing project-specific permitting guidance and/or assistance; collaborating on the improvement of existing, and/or development of new performance measures to gauge project outcomes; and involvement in public events to highlight restoration activities.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, hospitals, other non-profits, commercial (for-profit) organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments whose applications propose to benefit Great Lakes coastal and open-lake habitats. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with NOAA's GLHRP, states, non-governmental organizations, national service clubs or youth corps organizations and others that are eligible to apply.

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities in its educational and research programs. The DOC/NOAA vision, mission, and goals are to achieve full participation by Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) in order to advance the development of human potential, to strengthen the nation's capacity to provide high-quality education, and to increase opportunities for MSIs to participate in, and benefit from, Federal financial assistance programs. DOC/NOAA encourages proposals for innovative national and regional partnerships involving MSIs according to the criteria in this document, to strengthen the capacity of MSIs to foster student careers, research and workforce competitiveness in coastal habitat restoration through identification, development, implementation and monitoring of restoration activities.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

The overall initial focus of the GLHRP is to provide seed money to a partnership project(s) that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration to benefit Great Lakes coastal and open-lake resources within an Area of Concern (AOC). Additionally, the partnership(s) that propose to provide cash match toward project

implementation funds at the regional/local level (before local, project-specific contributions are included) will be likely to score higher in the evaluation of project costs. While this is not a requirement, the GLHRP strongly advises applicants to leverage as much investment as possible.

The match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services. Federal funds may not be considered matching funds. Applicants are permitted to combine non-federal contributions from additional partners as long as the matching funds are not already being used to match other funding sources and are available within the project period stated in the application. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV. E. 2. "Indirect Costs".

Applicants whose proposals are selected for habitat restoration partnership funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants must be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the number of volunteer or community participation hours devoted to the project(s).

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

The following list highlights the ideal qualities the GLHRP desires in working within a regional and local science-based restoration partnership(s). The list illustrates aspects that will be considered in the evaluation of applications, but it is not intended to limit the scope of partnership proposals.

- A partnership(s) that limits its administrative costs so that the bulk of funding goes to support on-the-ground project implementation.
- A partnership(s) that works closely with NOAA's scientist to ensure a science-based plan is implemented.
- A partnership application should target the restoration of specific habitats within an Area of Concern that is identified as a regional priority through a regional planning effort and is consistent with NOAA's priorities. Specific characteristics to consider when developing the project should include:
 - 1) Does the project clearly address significant and well-documented current or anticipated problems?
 - 2) Does the project improve and/or protect coastal and/or open-lake ecosystem resiliency, function and sustainability?
 - 3) Does the project recognize and attempt to address all known stresses?
 - 4) Is there a plan to measure and communicate results?
 - 5) Does the scientific information and data support the merit of this restoration?
- A partnership(s) that features an established network to effectively advance the vision of habitat restoration and support NOAA's ecosystem mission goal.

- Partnership projects will also be expected to involve science-based monitoring of the restoration projects. Applicants should work with NOAA's scientists located in the Great Lakes region to include monitoring during the project period of at least one structural and one functional parameter, as supported by Title I of the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000 (Pub. L.106-457), to ensure a basic assessment of project success.
- Proposals for a partnership(s) with a narrow restoration focus that will benefit limited resources or few user groups, that emphasize a single restoration component, such as only outreach, monitoring, land acquisition or program coordination, that lack a competitive or comprehensive restoration planning element for identifying and selecting projects, or that request funding solely to support or increase general organizational activities, are discouraged. Similarly, applications for a partnership(s) that would have limited NOAA involvement, or that seek to primarily support administration, salaries, overhead and non-essential travel are not considered ideal for the partnership development goals of the NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program Office (GLHRP), and will be less likely to be selected for partnership agreements with the GLHRP.
- Partnership project(s) will be expected to have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that provide long-term ecological habitat improvements for Great Lakes coastal and open-lake resources. NOAA recognizes that accomplishing restoration is a multi-faceted effort involving project design, engineering services, permitting, construction, oversight and monitoring. Therefore, to allow maximum flexibility under a partnership, applicants should avoid unduly restricting proposed activities to specific restoration phases or categories of cost. Typical "on-the-ground" projects may include: 1) improvements or re-establishment of fish passage through weirs, fish ladders or dam removals; 2) establishment of riparian buffer zones and improvement of freshwater habitat features in watersheds; 3) exclusionary fencing and riparian planting; 4) planting of native coastal wetland and submerged aquatic vegetation; and, 5) re-establishment of historic hydrology.
- It is the partner's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, state and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. If specific projects are identified at time of application, documentation of requests or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package as applicable. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA staff to conduct a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) along with a recommendation for funding for selected applications. For applicants that have not identified specific projects, so that NOAA staff cannot complete a project level NEPA analysis by the time of award, Special Award Conditions regarding NEPA will be included in the award document.

IV.

Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

This solicitation, complete application packages (including required federal application forms) with instructions and the address for submission, and information on the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition can be found on the World Wide Web at www.grants.gov, or by contacting GLHRP.GLERL@NOAA.gov.

Potential applicants are invited to contact NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program staff at GLHRP.GLERL@NOAA.gov before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of partnership ideas to the GLHRP's goals and objectives, and/or to request an application package that contains instructions for submitting NOAA standard grants applications and supplementary instructions specific to the GLHRP partnership competition.

B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants should apply through the grants.gov website, www.grants.gov, the clearinghouse for Federal financial assistance. A complete standard NOAA grants application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application should include (mandatory forms marked with an asterisk):

- required federal application forms, including:
 - o Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424* (9/03 version or newer)
 - o Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A* (one for each annual budget period)
 - o Assurances, Non-construction Programs: SF-424B*
 - o Certifications Regarding Lobbying: CD-511*
 - o CD-512 (remains with applicant-do not submit as part of the application package)
- depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:
 - o Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
 - o Applicant for Federal Assistance: CD-346* (required for the following individuals: Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Venture);
- a partnership summary (described below) (2 pages);
- a partnership narrative (described below) (15 pages);
- a detailed, narrative budget justification (described below) (2 pages/annual budget period);
- the curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel;
- letters documenting support; and,

- other relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as executive summaries of regional restoration planning documents or a site location map to indicate the geographic scope of the partnership (20 pages).

Applications should include only three files in addition to the Federal Application forms: 1) the project summary and narrative, 2) the budget justification, and 3) all other attachments combined, including resumes, restoration plans, maps, and support letters. PDF files are the preferred format; information about converting documents to PDF files is available on the grants.gov website.

1. Project Summary (2 pages):

- Applicant Organization
- Partnership Title
- Geographic Scope -state whether the partnership is regional or local, and what state(s) and/or watershed(s) it will cover
- Planning Framework - briefly describe any planning or prioritization framework the partnership may use to determine funding priorities
- Great Lakes coastal and/or open-lake resource likely to benefit - briefly describe the partnership resource focus, any restrictions expected such as only certain habitat types, specific applicant/user groups, specific resource/habitat targets, etc.
- Federal Funds Requested & Non-Federal Match Anticipated (including other Federal contributions that may help support the partnership)
- Letters of Support (list those included with the application, particularly those from NOAA and members of Congress)

2. Project Narrative (15 pages)

The project narrative should closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (below) for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The body of this narrative description should be no more than 15 pages long (in 12-point font with 1" margins; double-spaced type is preferred, but not required). The narrative should clearly demonstrate the broad-based benefits expected to habitats, and how these benefits will be achieved through the proposed partnership activities. It should identify the problems the partnership plans to address and the geographic area over which the partnership will operate. The narrative should describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, the criteria used for selecting the restoration project, and the relevance and significance of the project to enhancing the Great Lakes' coastal and open-lake resources. The narrative should also describe the historic condition of the restoration site, the process which resulted in degradation of the area and how these processes have been or is being abated to allow for successful restoration. Additionally, the narrative should describe what will be accomplished in each year of the proposals.

The narrative should describe how the partner(s) will ensure that all necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of federal funds for implementing the project(s) that may require permits and consultations, and

how the necessary information would be provided to NOAA staff to enable them to make a NEPA determination for all projects, particularly those projects that fall outside programmatic NEPA documents. It should also identify the anticipated partnership duration (between 12 and 36 months), the amount and timing of funds requested, potential sources of regional/local and local match, including cash match available at the regional/local level for supporting the project, and any restrictions the partner may impose on the further use of Federal funds.

The project narrative should also describe the organizational structure of the applicant, detail their qualifications and identify proposed partnership staff. Anticipated project partners other than the applicant should be identified, and supporting documentation indicating their intent to participate and identifying their potential contributions should be included. This is particularly important for those applying to establish regional partnerships. Inclusion of supplementary materials such as letters of support, restoration planning documents, photographs, etc. is strongly encouraged and do not count toward the narrative page limit. All supplementary materials should be combined and submitted as one single file separate from the narrative. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the partnership described in the application.

3. Budget Justification (2 pages/annual budget period)

Budgets must include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the partnership, with appropriate justification for both the federal and non-federal shares. A separate SF-424A budget form should be used to break down multi-year budget requests into annual funding increments, and the budget justification should mirror the organization of the forms. Budget justifications should indicate if funding requests to support partnership activities have been submitted elsewhere, whether the funds requested are federal or non-federal, and what amount has been requested or secured from other sources to support partnership activities described in the application submitted to NOAA. The NOAA Grants Management Division will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic. The NOAA Grants Management Division has a Budget Guidelines document available at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/appkit.shtml>.

4. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should apply through www.grants.gov. It takes approximately 3 weeks to register with [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and registration is required only once. Applicants should consider the time needed to register with [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and should begin the registration process well in advance of the application due date if they have never registered with [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). If [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) cannot reasonably be used, a paper application (which must be signed in ink) may be submitted to NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program. Paper applicants should be printed on one side only and should not be bound in any manner. Applicants submitting paper applications should also include a full copy of the application on compact disk.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications for partnership funding under the GLHRP should be submitted via www.grants.gov, and must be received by grants.gov no later than 11:59 PM EST on August 31, 2007 to be considered for funding. If grants.gov cannot reasonably be used, applications must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by August 31, 2007 and sent to: NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3), Office of Habitat Conservation, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14726, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: GLHRP Partnership Applications. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program from state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOCs are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Allowable Costs

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the partnership. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, equipment and supplies, as long as these are "necessary and reasonable" specifically for the purpose of the award. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the OMB Circulars A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations"; A-21, "Cost Principles for Education Institutions"; A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments"; and Federal Acquisition Regulation, codified at 48 Code of Federal Regulations, subpart 31.2 "Contracts with Commercial Organizations." All cost reimbursement sub-awards (subgrants, subcontracts, etc.) are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the

particular type of organization concerned.

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before a notice of award document is provided by the NOAA Grants Office is at the applicant's own risk. Typically, the earliest date for receipt of partnership awards will be February 1, 2008 and the earliest start date will be March 1, 2008. Applicants should consider this award timing when developing requested start dates for proposed restoration partnership activities.

2. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular partnership. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

F. Other Submission Requirements

None

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

A panel of reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 105 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (30 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state or local activities. For the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition this includes:

- Evaluating applications based on the potential of the partnership to significantly restore, protect, conserve, and enhance habitats and ecosystems vital to self-sustaining populations of Great Lakes coastal resources.
- The extent to which the partnership(s) is located in an Area of Concern and the types of habitats that are proposed to be restored under the partnership.
- The extent to which the restoration science involved is relevant to NOAA's mission.
- The extent to which the partnership leverages other restoration and recovery efforts and programs in the Great Lakes region.
- The extent to which the partnership will ensure long-term sustainability of the ecological benefits resulting from the proposed restoration activities.
- The extent to which the partnership contributes toward major improvements to the selected AOC ecosystem and addresses beneficial use impairments for habitat including: loss of fish and wildlife habitat, degraded fish and wildlife populations, and degradation of benthos.

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (40 points)

This criterion assesses whether the partnership approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition this includes:

- Evaluating applications based on the feasibility of the partnership to accomplish stated goals and objectives and the likelihood that the partnership will achieve significant progress within the proposed project period, including minimum monitoring, as demonstrated by the thoroughness of the partnership plan.
- Evaluating applications with respect to: (a) the adequacy of proposed strategies for coordination with NOAA in all phases of project design, implementation and monitoring; (b) the likelihood that restoration activities supported through the partnership will be consistent with regional/community/stakeholder planning processes, tie into restoration plans, or utilize some other planning framework to ensure prioritization of projects; (c) whether there are strong available scientific data and past or present NOAA studies in the AOC; and (d) whether there is an adequate strategy to ensure that the project will meet all federal, state and local environmental laws and obtain applicable permits and consultations.

3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (20 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition this includes:

- Evaluating applicants based on their capacity to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work by examining the qualifications, past experience, and potential of

the partner(s) to effectively identify, develop, select, manage and oversee all project phases, particularly financial and administrative management of sub-awards, and their ability to ensure scientifically-based monitoring is implemented on a project(s). Applicants developing their first partnership proposal with NOAA may not be able to document direct past experience and, therefore, will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all administrative aspects as described above, and by their description of qualifying characteristics such as education, training and/or experience of primary project participants, and facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to support the partnership work.

4. Project Costs (10 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition this includes:

- Evaluating applications based on whether the proposed budget is realistic, sufficiently detailed and commensurate with the project needs and time frame, and for appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A, and by annual budget period. A separate SF-424A budget form should be used to break down multi-year budget requests into annual funding increments. Applications proposing to use restoration funds to expand an organization's day-to-day activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. In order to encourage on-the-ground restoration, if funding for salaries is requested, it should be used to support staff directly involved in overseeing the accomplishment of the restoration work that will take place under the partnership and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task.
- Evaluating applications based on the need for funding and their cost-effectiveness by examining: (a) the percentage of funds that will be dedicated to all phases of restoration project implementation including physical, on-the-ground restoration compared to the percentage that is for administration, overhead and non-essential travel to be used by the partner--proposals that limit administrative costs to 20% at the regional/local level will be likely to score higher for this criterion; (b) the overall leverage of NOAA funds anticipated, including the amount of cash match available on the national/regional level specifically to support project implementation; (c) in addition to cash match, the ability of this partnership to leverage actions of other parties through in-kind services or connections to on-going actions and projects; and (d) the ability of the applicant organization to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. NOAA desires cost sharing to leverage funding and to further encourage partnerships among government, industry, and academia.

5. Outreach, Education and Community Involvement (5 points)

This criterion assesses the degree of community support and involvement in the project. For the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Partnership Grants competition this includes evaluating applications based on:

- The potential of the partnership to foster long-term stewardship for living marine resources and generate or increase a community-identified priorities for conservation ethic;
- The level support as demonstrated by a diversity of other involved partners, either known or anticipated based on past experience; and
- The level of support for the partnership as demonstrated by letters of support from these partners, local entities, state, local or federal governments and/or members of Congress.

Community involvement may include: (a) sponsorship from local entities, either through in-kind goods and services (earth moving, technical expertise, conservation easements) or cash contributions; (b) support from state and local governments; and (c) ability to achieve long-term stewardship for restored resources.

B. Review and Selection Process

1. Initial Screening of Applicants

Once a full application has been received by GLHRP, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

2. Review

Full proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria below by (A) independent technical mail reviewers, and/or (B) independent technical panel reviewers consisting of Federal experts, which will convene collectively to review proposals. Only panel reviewers may be used if only a few applications are received. If technical panel reviewers evaluate all proposals, only their ratings may be used to establish the rank order. No consensus advice will be given by the panel.

Occasionally a reviewer may, due to lack of familiarity in a particular area, choose not to score a particular proposal. The scores from each technical panel reviewer for each proposal will be averaged to produce a single numerical score for the proposal. The average scores for all proposals result in a numerical rank order within each program element.

If technical mail review and technical panel review are both conducted, the available technical mail reviews will be provided to the technical review panel for use in its deliberations prior to providing its ratings. If only a technical panel review or both a technical panel review and a technical mail review were conducted, the numerical rank order of the technical review panel will be used to determine funding recommendations to the Selecting Official (SO).

C. Selection Factors

The proposals shall be recommended in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

- 1) Availability of funding
- 2) Duplication of proposed activities with other activities funded or considered for funding by NOAA and/or other federal agencies
- 3) Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Section I
- 4) Applicant's prior award performance
- 5) Partnerships with/participation of targeted groups of interest to NOAA.
- 6) Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to GMD.

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scored proposals.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding, and unsuccessful applications will be kept on file until the end of the fiscal year for which they were submitted.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applications generally will be identified by February 1, 2008. Typically, the earliest start date for partnerships will be March 1, 2008, dependent on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations and NEPA analysis and documentation supporting of cooperative activities. Applicants should consider this timeline when developing requested start dates for proposed partnership activities.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the partnership duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each partnership will be determined in

pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and the NOAA GLHRP staff. Partnership activities should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Office.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative Requirements

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided with a copy of the award by the NOAA Grants Office, and can be found at: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/oebam/pdf/ST&C-rev-1002.pdf>.

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill, and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award, as applicable, such as the required use of the NOAA Restoration Center's data form and narrative format approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 for submitting semi-annual progress reports and/or reports from sub-awardees.

2. NEPA Requirements

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals which are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm.

Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the

denial of an application.

The GHLRP will review individual partnership considered for funding for National Environmental Policy Act compliance on a project by project basis. Restoration activities will be reviewed under NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NAO 216-6 is located at <http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/~nao/216-6.html>.

Successful partnership project proposals need to provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination, and that funds will not be released until NOAA completes necessary NEPA documentation. Successful applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible on projects considered for sub-awards to obtain guidance with respect to the level and scope of information needed by NOAA to comply with NEPA; a phased approach may be recommended.

C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods as indicated in the award documentation provided by GMD. Progress reports are due directly to the NOAA Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program Office and are due no later than 30 days after each 6 month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

Progress reports should detail partnership activities that have occurred at the regional or local level during the reporting period that correspond with goals and objectives identified in the narrative, as well as provide specific, project-related information as described below.

Progress reports for projects under each approved partnership must be submitted using a specific format for narrative information and a form for project specific details. This format and form can be found on the NOAA Habitat Restoration webpage at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports.html. Use of this required progress report form and format involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, and has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472 and expires on May 31, 2009. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants office.

Financial reports are due semi-annually and should be submitted directly to the NOAA Grants Office. Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - September 30 (due by October 30).

VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Jenni Wallace (301)713-0174 x191 or David Landsman at (301)713-0174 x 151 or GLHRP.GLERL@NOAA.gov.

VIII. Other Information

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)) or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S. C. 601 et seq.).

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 06050001.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.